

Key findings on the influence of *community* on School Safety

Many respondents perceive community influence on school violence and school safety issues. Following are some key influencing factors that are highlighted.

Crime factors

- Homicide in certain communities.
- Domestic abuse, child abuse, and sexual abuse, especially in isolated communities.
- Substance abuse in the form of alcohol and drugs and easy availability of substances.
- Gangs, especially, family involvement with gangs.
- Illegal businesses in communities with low-income housing.

Socioeconomic factors

- More fights, inadequate coping skills, and priorities separate from education in low SES families.
- Inadequate after-school activities and prolonged periods of inadequate child-supervision in isolated communities.

Psychosocial factors

- Student "baggage" pertaining to verbal and physical abuse from the family.
- Suicides among children from isolated communities.
- Students from dysfunctional situations frequently consider prisons as a step-up.
- Students act out and imitate negative behaviors observed at home (like gender discrimination and abuse).

Television and media

- Television, movies, and peer influence.
- Media and the challenge to maintain confidentiality of student-level information.

While schools might attempt tackling some problems in the community the school is only one element in school safety, in addition to the community and family. By and large there is not much that schools can do about community-related issues. However, it is very useful for schools to be aware of these factors so that they can try and accommodate related information into their policy discussions pertaining to school safety. It is also very important for schools to have positive collaborations with various agencies like law enforcement, Child Protective Services, and health services to maintain safe school environments.